

Technical Information for Environmental Management of Influenza Virus -- **DRAFT**

Based on federal guidance: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/panfacts.html>

Influenza is primarily spread from person to person by coughs and sneezes. Droplets from an infected person can spray directly on another person, travelling as far as six feet, or settle on surfaces (floors, walls, windows, tables, countertops, equipment and appliances). Surfaces can be contaminated when an infected person coughs or sneezes into his or her hands and then touches them (e.g.: phones, remote controls, keyboards, door handles, or toys). People can become exposed by touching contaminated surfaces and then their mouth, nose, or eyes before they clean their hands. Influenza viruses can persist on hands for up to several hours and on surfaces for up to 72 hours, depending on temperature and moisture.

Good hygiene practices plus social distancing is the key to controlling the spread of influenza.

Individuals should:

- **Wash hands often, and:**
 - After sneezing or blowing their nose.
 - Before touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.
 - After using the bathroom.
 - Before preparing food or eating.
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
 - Put the used tissue in a waste basket, and **wash hands**.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow if you do not have a tissue.

Hand washing that removes germs requires using soap and warm* water and rubbing for 20 seconds. Alcohol-based hand wipes or alcohol-based (60-95% alcohol) gel hand sanitizers, can substitute for hand washing if soap and water are not available. Use a generous amount and rub the hands together until the liquid or gel dries.

Cleaning and Disinfection of Hard Surfaces

- Routine cleaning and disinfection will reduce the amount of the virus present on surfaces and help minimize the transfer of all microorganisms.
- Clean surfaces with a commercial product that is both a detergent (cleans) and a disinfectant (kills germs). An alternative is to clean surfaces and then use an approved disinfectant. Any commercially available soap or detergent can be used. Water can be cold or warm, or as recommended on the label of the cleaning product used (if a specific temperature is listed).
- Keep surfaces such as countertops and desks clean with soap/detergent and water or approved cleaners. Repeated application of disinfectants to table and desktop surfaces is not necessary.
- Use disinfectants on any surface that is touched often by multiple people. Clean the surface before using disinfectants, unless using a product that combines the two functions, as indicated on the label.
- Wipe frequently touched electronic items (e.g., remote controls, hand-held gaming devices, key boards, phones) with hand-sanitizer cloths registered for use against influenza virus and safe for plastics.

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- Clean and disinfect bathroom surfaces on a regular basis.
- Follow label instructions carefully when using disinfectants and cleaners. Pay attention to any hazard warnings and instructions on the labels for using personal protective items (such as household gloves). Do not mix disinfectants and cleaners unless the label indicates it is safe to do so. **Do not mix bleach or chlorine products with ammonia or quaternary ammonia cleaners. Fumes produced can cause serious respiratory damage.**
- It is not recommended to use air deodorizers and/or disinfectants sprayed in the air.
- Disinfectants are registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA believes, based on available scientific information, that the currently registered influenza A virus products will be effective against the 2009-H1N1 flu strain and other influenza A virus strains on hard, non-porous surfaces. Choose a product whose label states that it is effective against "Influenza A virus" and lists your specific site of concern; such as: farm premises, hospitals and other healthcare facilities, schools, offices or homes. **Read and follow label directions.** Influenza viruses can be inactivated by many disinfectants. Disinfectants registered for use against influenza include ones containing chlorine (bleach), aldehydes, quaternary ammonium compounds (quats), phenolics, alcohols, or peroxygens. Some products, such as those with quaternary ammonia, clean and disinfect.
- After cleaning, if a combination cleaner/disinfectant such as a quaternary ammonia compound was not used, a chlorine bleach solution can be used to disinfect surfaces. Use a cloth to apply the solution to surfaces and let stand for 3 – 5 minutes before rinsing with clean water. Solution concentration: add 1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart (4 cups) of water; for a larger supply of disinfectant, add ¼ cup of bleach to a gallon (16 cups) of water. Wear gloves to protect your hands when working with bleach.

*Warm water is required for hand washing in schools and restaurants. If warm water is not available, using cold water is better than not washing. The recommended temperature for hand washing: 85°F-110°F.

For more information:

- Antimicrobial Products Registered for Use Against Influenza A Viruses on Hard Surfaces: <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/influenza-disinfectants.html>
- *Interim Guidance on Environmental of Pandemic Influenza Virus*, Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces to protect against pandemic influenza virus: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/influenzaguidance.html>
- Pandemic influenza: www.pandemicflu.gov
- H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu): <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- Washington State Department of Health: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/swineflu/>
- Preparing Schools for Swine Flu, OSPI: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HealthServices/swineflu.aspx>